

REMARKS

By the above actions, claims 1, 8 & 13 have been amended and new claims 14-17 presented. Additionally, a replacement sheet of drawings has been presented containing corrected Figs. 5 & 7. In view of these actions and the following remarks, further consideration of this application is now requested.

The Examiner objected to the drawings due to the numeral 26 having been utilized to identify two different elements. The corrected drawing figures referred to above, change the numeral 26 in Figs. 5 & 7 to 27 so as to eliminate this problem. A similar change has been made to page 10 of the specification. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is in order and is now requested.

The objection to claim 13 has been noted, but a review of claim 13 indicated that no improper multiple dependency existed, and thus, this claim should have been examined (so that a final rejection of this unamended claim in the next office action should be improper). That is, the cited 37 CFR 1.75(c) only precludes a multiple dependent claim from depending upon another multiple dependent claim and does not preclude a singly dependent claim from depending on a multiple dependent claim, and claim 13 was/is a singly dependent claim. However, in an excess of caution, in view of the Examiner's objection, claim 8 has been split into two equivalent singly dependent claims 8 and 14, with claim 13 remaining dependent upon claim 8 and a new claim 15 that correspond to claim 13 being presented that depends from claim 14. Withdrawal of this objection is hereby requested.

Concerning the Examiner's rejection with regard to claims 1-3, 5, 10 and 11 have been rejected under 35 USC § 102 as being anticipated by the disclosure of the Meckel et al. patent while claims 4 & 6 have been found to be obvious under § 103 based on this reference. However, from the Examiner's comments relative to claim 2, it appears that the Examiner may have misunderstood the present invention and the fact that the guiding pressure plate is actually one or more of the pressure plates that has been designed to maintain guiding engagement with the sides of the corresponding cell in the under-part at the end of the molded part ejection phase. In particular, the guiding pressure plate, whether in the form of a

thicker pressure plate or as a pressure plate with an extension, must coincide with the periphery of the pressure plate to provide the requisite guidance when the lower end of the pressure plates clear the bottom end of the cells.

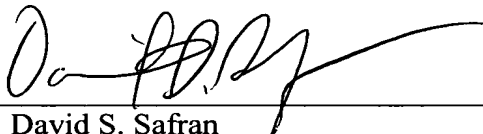
In the illustrated embodiment of the guiding pressure plate according to the invention, it is noted that not all of the pressure plates in the upper part are equipped to be a guiding pressure plate, but rather four of the pressure plates, namely the "corner-pressure plates," as indicated in Fig. 1, constitute guiding pressure plates. However, more or fewer pressure plates can be designed to serve as guiding pressure plates and they need not be at the corners. This is possible due to the rigid upper retaining plate 4, to which the plungers carrying the pressure plates are secured. Theoretically, even one appropriately located guiding pressure plate should be sufficient to achieve guiding engagement with the corresponding cell in the underpart, the guiding engagement with the corresponding cell coming about from the fact that, when the pressure plates have passed through the cells for purposes of ejecting the molded items, positive guidance of the pressure plungers relative to the cells still occurs because the extension(s) or thickened portions of guidance pressure plate(s) remain(s) in the associated cell(s) (see the first paragraph of page 9 of the present application). New claims 16 & 17 correspond in scope to original claims 1 & 2, but present the subject matter thereof via different wording and in a more conventional U.S. format.

Concerning the Meckel et al. patent, Fig. 18 very clearly shows that the plates formed on the lower end of the plungers have a smaller horizontal area than the pressure plates 124 themselves. This means that these portions of the plungers cannot be used to guide the upper part in a way that would ensure that the pressure plates maintain their position with respect to the cells because they would not reach the cell walls which have the larger dimensions of the pressure plates 124. Thus, since the parts which the Examiner has equated with applicants' guidance pressure plates cannot meet the claimed recitations because they cannot provide the requisite guidance and nothing in the Meckel et al. patent would suggest this aspect of applicants' invention, the outstanding rejections under §§ 102/103 based on the Meckel et al. patent should be withdrawn and such action is hereby requested.

As for the rejection of claims 7-9 and 12 under 35 USC § 103 based on the Meckel et al. patent when viewed in combination with the Springs et al. patent, this rejection suffers from the above mentioned shortcomings of the Meckel et al. patent which are shared by the plungers and pressure plates of the Springs et al. patent. Furthermore, with respect to claims 7-9, it noted that the stop pins in Spring et al., nos. 55 and 56, serve to limit the lowering of the pressure plates in the upper part during the vibration process and to secure a uniform block height of the molded items. The stop pins in Spring et al. both serve the same purpose as the unnumbered bolts at the underside of die support 131 of the Meckel et al. patent, namely to secure a uniform block height of the molded items. What Meckel et al. and Spring et al. do not reveal is stop pins which serve the purpose of keeping the pressure plates engaged in the cells during stripping of the molded items from the cell divided under part, when the under part is raised to a certain minimum height which is greater than the thickness of the molded items. Thus, these claims further distinguish the present invention from the applied prior art. Therefore, the § 103 rejection should also be withdrawn and such action is now requested.

While the present application is now believed to be in condition for allowance, should the Examiner find some issue to remain unresolved, or should any new issues arise, which could be eliminated through discussions with applicants' representative, then the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone for that purpose.

Respectfully submitted,

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